Association of Micro Finance Institutions- West Bengal

Socio-Economic and Literacy Dimensions of Women Microfinance Borrowers in Jharkhand: Evidence from a Cross-Sectional Study.

The said Project Mid-term research initiative, is under WE-LEAD Project- Jharkhand and its Activities.

The project is supported by SIDBI

The study conducted by Dr. Mihir Ghosh, Researcher, AMFI-WB.

Background: Microfinance has emerged as a powerful instrument for fostering financial inclusion and empowering marginalized communities, particularly women in rural and semi-urban regions of India. By providing access to small loans, savings opportunities, and financial services, microfinance enables women to invest in income-generating activities, improve household well-being, and enhance their decision-making power.

Jharkhand, a state characterized by significant socio-economic diversity and challenges such as poverty, low literacy levels, and limited livelihood opportunities, presents a unique context for examining the role of microfinance. Women in this region often face social and economic barriers that restrict their participation in the formal economy. Access to microfinance not only supports them in meeting household financial needs but also strengthens their capacity to contribute to community development.

This study, seeks to explore the interplay between financial access, literacy levels (both educational and financial/digital), and the socio-economic outcomes of women borrowers. By analyzing repayment behavior, savings habits, decision-making roles, and the use of digital financial services, the research highlights how microfinance contributes to women's economic resilience and social empowerment.

The findings are expected to provide evidence on the importance of microfinance not just as a financial tool, but as a catalyst for enhancing literacy, promoting self-reliance, and enabling women in Jharkhand to play a more active role in household and community-level decision-making.

Objective of the study:

I. To analyze the socio-economic profile of women microfinance borrowers in Jharkhand with specific reference to their income, education, and household characteristics.
II. To examine the relationship between loan size and its utilization in income-generating and household activities among the borrowers.
III. To evaluate the role of microfinance in enhancing women's social empowerment, particularly in household decision-making, mobility, and participation in community activities.
IV. To study the level of financial and digital literacy among the borrowers and their adoption of digital payment methods for loan repayment and other transactions.

Methods and Methodology:

Study Area: The study was conducted in six districts of Jharkhand — Ranchi, Khunti, Gumla, Lohardaga, Chatra, and Hazaribag. These districts were selected as they represent diverse socio-economic conditions, varying levels of literacy, and significant penetration of microfinance institutions (MFIs) and banks offering microcredit. The region is characterized by rural and semi-urban settlements, where women face multiple challenges related to poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, and restricted access to financial services.

Research Design: A cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted for the study. This design was considered appropriate to capture the socio-economic, financial, and literacy-related dimensions of women microfinance borrowers at a single point in time.

Sample Size and Selection: The study covered a sample of 534 women participants, who were borrowers from microfinance institutions (MFIs) and banks operating in the selected districts. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure inclusion of borrowers who met the defined criteria. The distribution of respondents across the six districts was proportional to the presence of MFIs and women's borrowing activities in those regions.

Inclusion Criteria: Participants were included in the study based on the following criteria:

- Women borrowers of microfinance institutions (MFIs) or banks.
- Those who had received at least one microcredit loan.
- Willingness to participate in the study and provide informed responses.

Data Collection:

Primary Data: The first-hand data was collected directly from the field by trained field investigators using a structured interview schedule/questionnaire. This tool captured information on socio-economic characteristics, loan size and utilization, repayment behavior, savings, financial decision-making, and awareness and use of digital payment methods.

Secondary Data: Supporting information was also reviewed from reports, research papers, and relevant documents related to microfinance in Jharkhand to complement the primary findings.

Data Analysis: The collected data was systematically coded, tabulated, and analyzed using SPSS software. Percentages, averages, and cross-tabulations were used to present socio-economic and financial dimensions, while comparative analysis across districts was carried out to highlight variations.

Results:

Table (1): District wise study population according to age group.

District	Age group in Years						Total
	18 to 30		31 to 40		Above 40		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Hazaribag	67	49.30%	47	34.60%	22	16.20%	**136**
Khunti	45	41.30%	48	44.00%	16	14.70%	**109**
Gumla	37	37.00%	52	52.00%	11	11.00%	**100**
Lohardaga	40	48.20%	34	41.00%	9	10.80%	**83**
Ranchi	4	5.90%	44	64.70%	20	29.40%	**68**
Chatra	15	39.50%	14	36.80%	9	23.70%	**38**
Combined District	208	39.00%	239	44.80%	87	16.30%	**534**

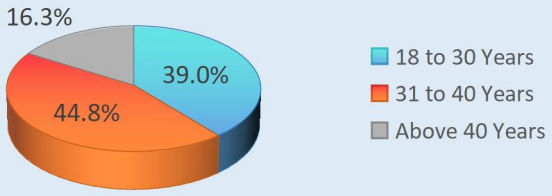
Table (1): District-wise study population according to age group. Out of 534 respondents, the largest group is 31–40 years (44.8%), followed by 18–30 years (39.0%), while only 16.3% are above 40 years. This indicates that microfinance borrowers are mostly young to middle-aged adults. District-level patterns.

Hazaribag & Lohardaga: Younger borrowers (18–30 years) dominate (≈49%).

Khunti: Age distribution is balanced; the 31–40 group (44%) is slightly higher.

Gumla: Clear dominance of 31–40 age group (52%), suggesting stronger participation of middle-aged women.

Figure (1): Classified population based on age group



Ranchi: Very distinct – 64.7% are 31–40 years, while young borrowers (18–30) are very few (only 5.9%).

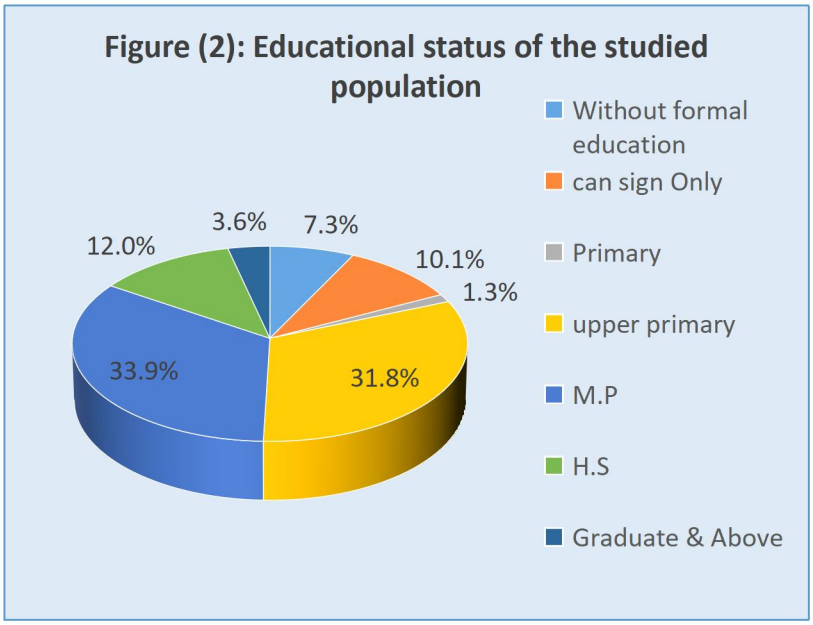
Chatra: More evenly spread across groups, but still younger borrowers (39.5%) are slightly higher.

Figure-1 also present the majority of borrowers fall in the 31–40 years age group (44.8%), followed by 18–30 years (39.0%), while only 16.3% are above 40 years, indicating dominance of young and middle-aged women in microfinance borrowing.

Table (2): Age wise educational status of the study population.

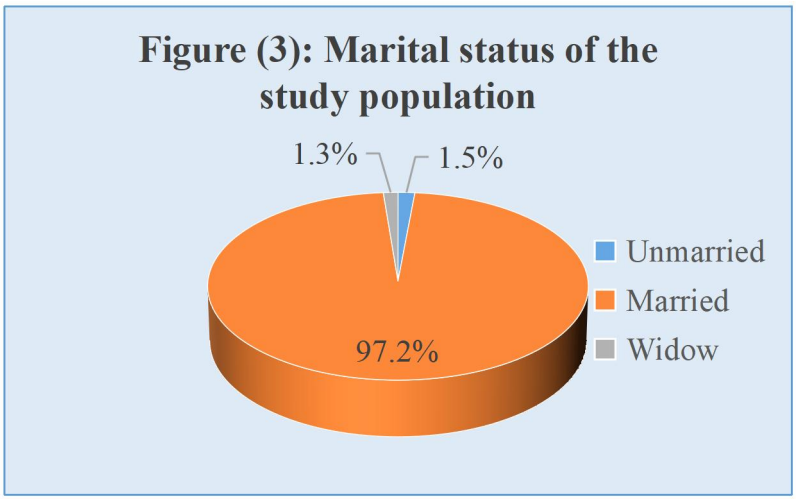
Age-group in years	Educational Status						
	Without formal education	can sign Only	Primary	upper primary	M.P	H.S	Graduate & Above
18 to 30	7	12	2	70	75	28	14
	3.40%	5.80%	1.00%	33.70%	36.10%	13.50%	6.70%
31 to 40	13	22	3	78	89	29	5
	5.40%	9.20%	1.30%	32.60%	37.20%	12.10%	2.10%
Above 40	19	20	2	22	17	7	0
	21.80%	23.00%	2.30%	25.30%	19.50%	8.00%	0.00%
Overall	39	54	7	170	181	64	19
	7.30%	10.10%	1.30%	31.80%	33.90%	12.00%	3.60%

The table **(2)** and figure **(2)** on educational status of the studied population. Overall status: A large share of respondents have upper primary (31.8%) and M.P. (33.9%) education, showing that most borrowers studied up to school level. Only 3.6% are graduates and above, while a notable 17.4% (without formal education + can sign only) have minimal literacy.



By age group: Among 18–30 years, the majority attained upper primary (33.7%) and M.P. (36.1%), indicating comparatively better education among younger borrowers. In 31–40 years, the trend is similar, with strong representation in upper primary (32.6%) and M.P. (37.2%), but a small share in higher education. Among those above 40 years, a significant proportion lack formal education (21.8%) or can only sign (23.0%), while none have higher education, reflecting generational educational gaps.

Figure **(3)** showing the Marital status of the study population. Overall distribution. The study population is overwhelmingly dominated by married women (97.2%), while only a very small fraction are unmarried (1.3%) or widows (1.5%). The dominance of married women highlights that microfinance participation is primarily among household women, who are usually responsible for family welfare and financial management. The negligible share of unmarried women suggests limited access or demand for micro-credit among younger, single women—possibly due to lack of independent financial responsibilities. The small proportion of widows (1.5%) reflects their weaker representation in microfinance programs, potentially linked to socio-economic vulnerabilities, dependence, or lack of awareness. The data indicates that microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the study area primarily serve married women as their main client base, positioning them as central agents in household-level economic activities and credit utilization.



Based on the provided figure **(4)** , the economic categories of the study population are distributed as follows BPL (Below Poverty Line): This group constitutes the largest portion, at 53.4%. APL (Above Poverty Line): This group makes up 39.0% of the population. This category represents the smallest segment, at 7.7%. The figure shows that more than half of the study population falls into the BPL category, indicating a significant portion of the population is economically disadvantaged.

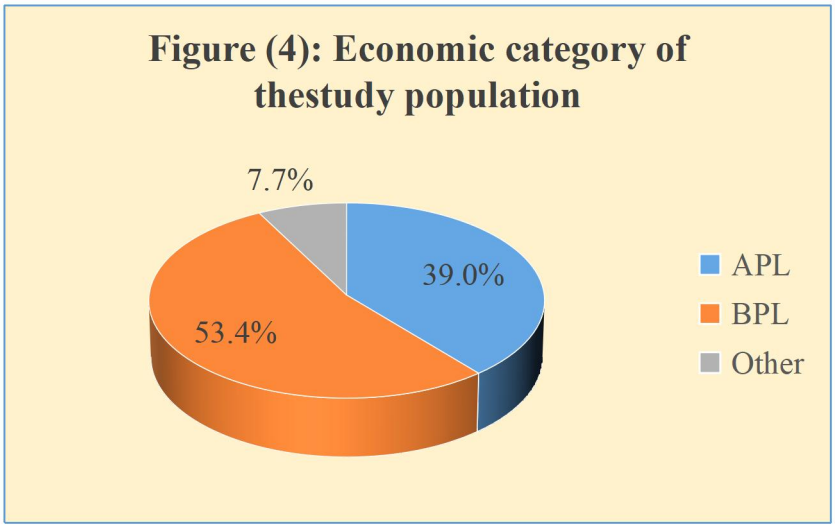
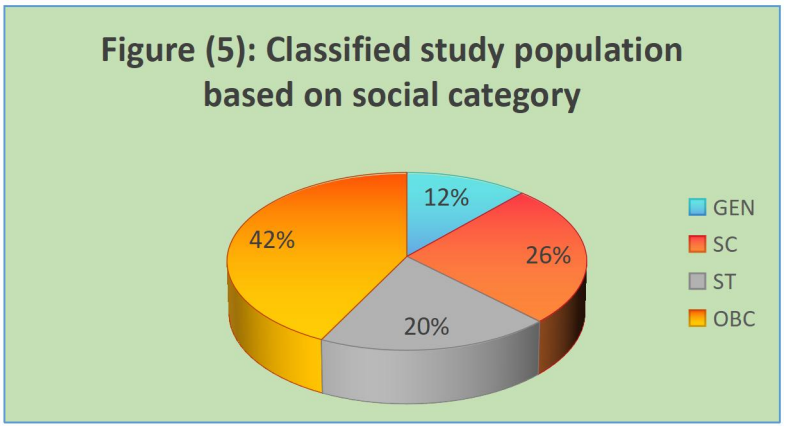


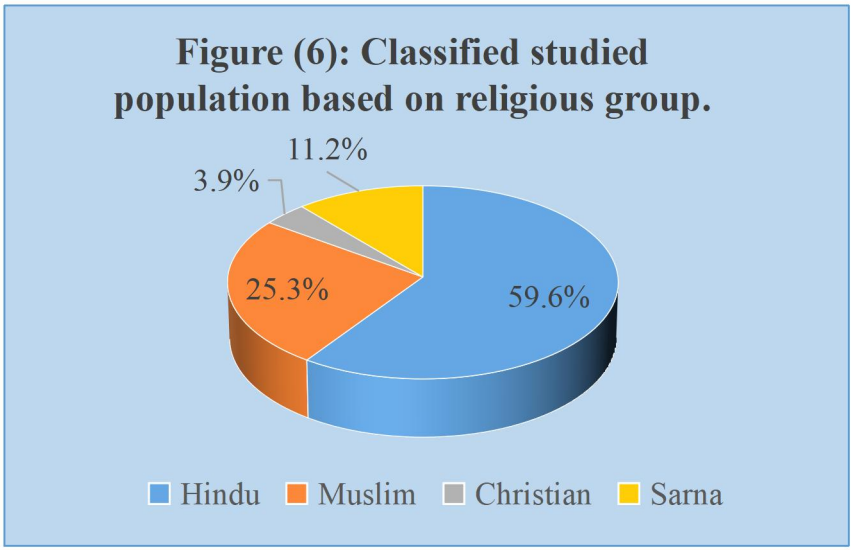
Figure **(5),** showing the social categories of the study population are distributed as follows:



- OBC (Other Backward Classes): This group makes up the largest portion, at 42%.
- SC (Scheduled Castes): This group is the second largest, at 26%.
- ST (Scheduled Tribes): This group accounts for 20% of the population.
- GEN (General): This is the smallest group, at 12%.

The analysis shows that the majority of the study population belongs to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes (SC) categories, which together account for 68% of the total population. The Scheduled Tribes (ST) and General (GEN) categories make up the remaining 32%.

Based on the figure **(6), p**rovided, the religious distribution of the study population is as follows:



Hindu: This is the largest religious group, making up **59.6%** of the population.

Muslim: This group accounts for the second-largest portion, at **25.3%**.

Sarna: This religious group represents **11.2%** of the population.

Christian: This is the smallest group, at **3.9%**.

The analysis shows that the Hindu and Muslim populations together constitute a significant majority, accounting for 84.9% of the study population. The remaining population is comprised of individuals from the Sarna and Christian faiths. The high percentage of the Hindu population in this study aligns with the overall demographics of India, where Hinduism is the majority religion.

The figure **(7) in**dicates that the primary sources of drinking water are:

- ✓ **Tap water: 42.3%**
- ✓ **Tube-well: 36.7%**
- ✓ **Well: 15.4%**
- ✓ **Others: 5.6%**

This suggests that most of the population relies on a mix of public and private water sources, with tap water and tube wells being the most common.

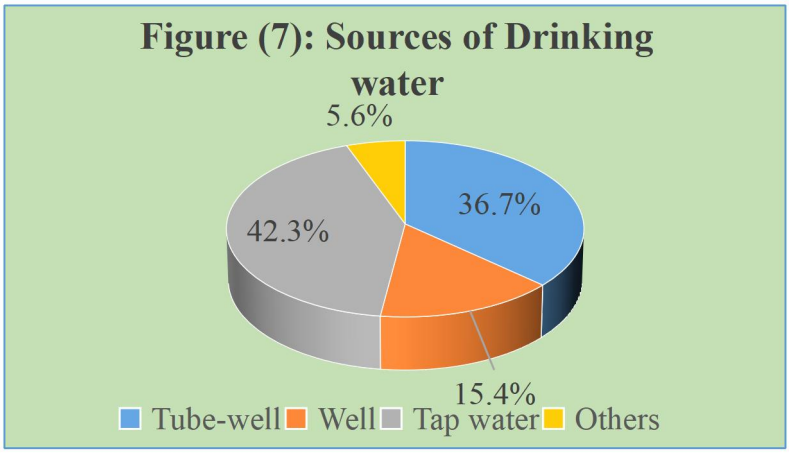
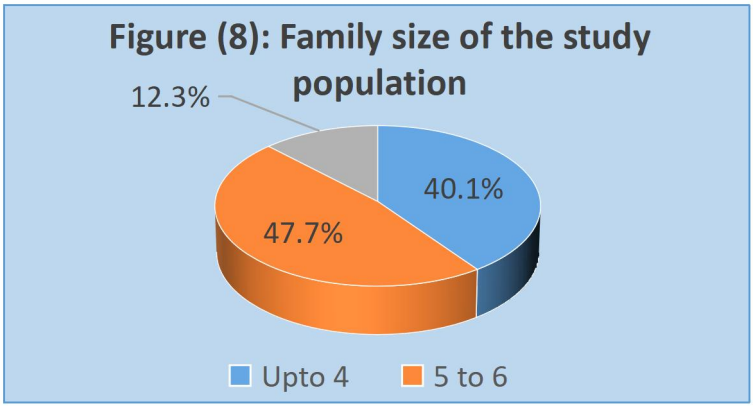


Table (3): District-wise Household Members among the Study Population

District	Family Members		
	Upto 4	5 to 6	Above- 6
Hazaribag	34.1%	51.5%	14.4%
Khunti	44.8%	45.7%	9.5%
Gumla	33.7%	50.5%	15.8%
Lohardaga	50.0%	42.3%	7.7%
Ranchi	35.3%	52.9%	11.8%
Chatra	52.8%	33.3%	13.9%
Overall	**40.1%**	**47.7%**	**12.3%**

The table **(3)** and figure **(8),** demonstrated in detailed of the family size of the study population.



5 to 6 members: This is the largest group, representing **47.7%** of the population.

Up-to 4 members: This group accounts for **40.1%**.

Above 6 members: This is the smallest group, at **12.3%**.

This indicates that a significant majority of the families in the study population, about **87.8%**, have between one and six members.

The table provides a breakdown of the same family size categories across six different districts.

- Hazaribag: The majority of families have 5 to 6 members (51.5%), followed by families with upto 4 members (34.1%).
- Khunti: This district has a more even distribution between smaller and medium-sized families, with 44.8% having upto 4 members and 45.7% having 5 to 6 members.
- Gumla: Similar to Hazaribag, the largest group has 5 to 6 members (50.5%), with a substantial number of families having upto 4 members (33.7%).
- Lohardaga: This district stands out as it has the highest percentage of families with upto 4 members (50.0%), and the lowest percentage of families with above 6 members (7.7%).
- Ranchi: This district has the highest percentage of families with 5 to 6 members (52.9%).
- Chatra: This district has the highest percentage of families with upto 4 members (52.8%), and the lowest percentage of families with 5 to 6 members (33.3%).

The overall trend shows that families with 5 to 6 members are the most common, there are variations among the districts. Lohardaga and Chatra have the highest prevalence of smaller families (up to 4 members), whereas Hazaribag, Gumla, and Ranchi have the highest prevalence of medium-sized families (5 to 6 members).

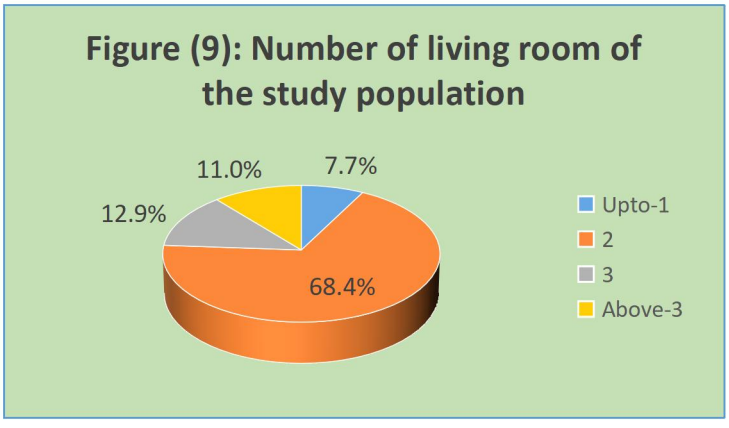
Table (4): Number of living room of the study population.

District	Number of Living Room			
	Upto-1	2	3	Above-3
Hazaribag	11.8%	66.9%	11.8%	9.6%
Khunti	2.8%	75.2%	19.3%	2.8%
Gumla	2.0%	52.0%	13.0%	33.0%
Lohardaga	3.6%	88.0%	8.4%	0.0%
Ranchi	0.0%	70.6%	14.7%	14.7%
Chatra	44.7%	50.0%	5.3%	0.0%
Overall	7.7%	68.4%	12.9%	11.0%

The figure **(9)** and table **(4),** here is a detailed analysis of the number of living rooms in the study population's homes.

Overall Distribution of Living Rooms. The pie chart shows the overall distribution for the entire study population:

- ✓ **2 living rooms:** This is the most common



number of living rooms, accounting for 68.4% of the population.
- ✓ **3 living rooms:** This group makes up 12.9%.
- ✓ **Above 3 living rooms**: This category represents 11.0%.
- ✓ **Only 1 living room**: This is the smallest category, at 7.7%.

The data indicates that a substantial majority of the study population lives in a dwelling with exactly two living rooms.

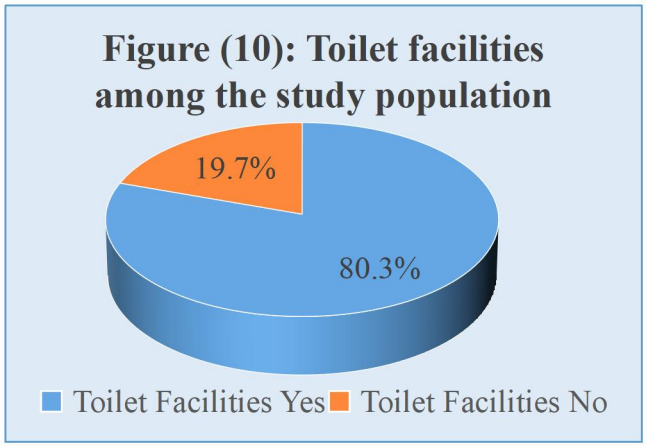
The table provides a breakdown of the number of living rooms across six districts:

- **Lohardaga:** This district has the highest percentage of homes with 2 living rooms (88.0%) and the lowest percentage of homes with more than three living rooms (0.0%).
- **Khunti:** A very high percentage of homes (75.2%) have 2 living rooms, with a notable portion having 3 living rooms (19.3%).
- **Ranchi:** Similar to the overall trend, a high percentage of homes have 2 living rooms (70.6%).
- **Hazaribag:** This district closely mirrors the overall average, with a majority of homes having 2 living rooms (66.9%).
- **Chatra:** This district has a unique distribution, with the highest percentage of homes having up to 1 living room (44.7%) and a lower percentage of homes with 2 living rooms (50.0%) compared to other districts.
- **Gumla:** This district has the lowest percentage of homes with 2 living rooms (52.0%) and, conversely, the highest percentage of homes with above 3 living rooms (33.0%), which is a significant deviation from the other districts.

In summary, while having two living rooms is the most common living arrangement across all districts, there are clear regional differences. Lohardaga shows a strong concentration in two-living-room homes, while Gumla has a notably higher number of larger homes, and Chatra has a higher concentration of smaller homes with one or fewer living rooms.

Table (5): District wise toilet facilities among the study population

District	Toilet Facilities	
	Yes	No
Hazaribag	75.7%	24.3%
Khunti	78.0%	22.0%
Gumla	66.0%	34.0%
Lohardaga	85.5%	14.5%
Ranchi	97.1%	2.9%
Chatra	100.0%	0.0%
Combined District	**80.3%**	**19.7%**



From the figure **(10)** and table **(5),** here is a brief analysis of the toilet facilities among the study population.

Overall Toilet Facilities, The pie chart (Figure 10) shows that the majority of the study population has toilet facilities.

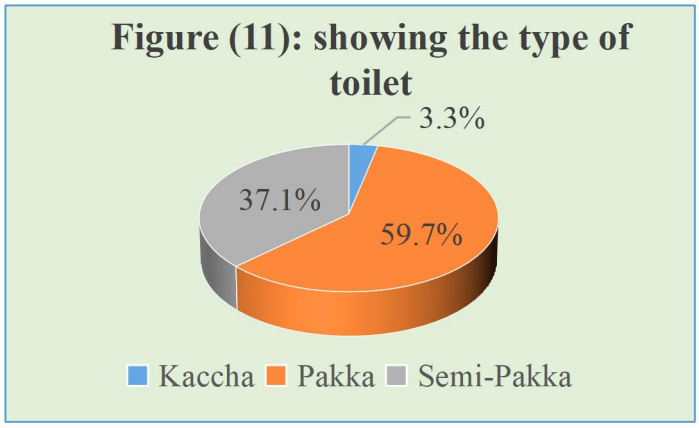
- **Yes: 80.3%** of the population has access to a toilet.
- **No: 19.7%** of the population lacks toilet facilities. This indicates that while a large portion of the population has access to sanitation, a significant minority still does not.

The table provides a breakdown of toilet facilities by district:

- ✓ **Chatra:** This district has a **100%** rate of toilet facilities, meaning every household surveyed in this district has a toilet.
- ✓ **Ranchi:** This district also shows very high access, with **97.1%** of households having a toilet.
- ✓ **Lohardaga:** This district has a high rate of toilet access at **85.5%**.
- ✓ **Khunti: 78.0%** of households in this district have a toilet.
- ✓ **Hazaribag:** This district is slightly below the overall average, with **75.7%** having toilet facilities.
- ✓ **Gumla:** This district has the lowest percentage of households with toilet facilities, at **66.0%**.

The overall trend is positive, with most of the population having toilet facilities. However, there is a clear disparity between districts, with Gumla having the lowest access rate and Chatra and Ranchi having nearly universal access.

From the provided figures **(11 & 12),** analysis the type of toilets and their water connections among the study population.
The first figure shows the distribution of toilet types:

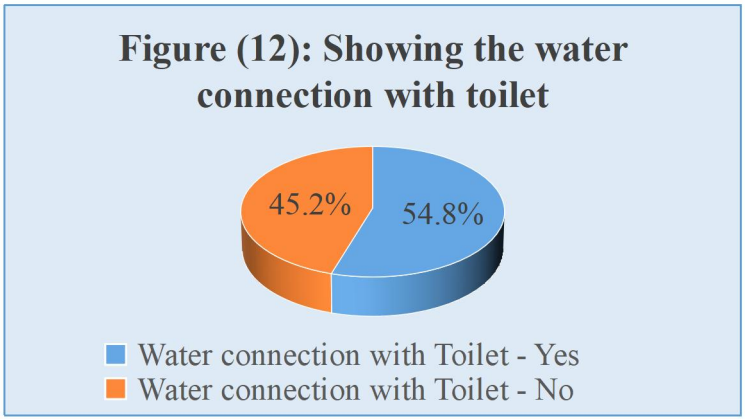


- **Pakka:** This is the most prevalent type, accounting for **59.7%** of the toilets.
- **Semi-Pakka:** This type constitutes a significant portion, at **37.1%**.
- **Kaccha:** This is the least common type, representing a small fraction of **3.3%**.

This indicates that the majority of the population with toilet facilities has either a "Pakka" (permanent and robust) or "Semi-Pakka" (partially permanent) structure, suggesting a relatively high standard of construction.

The figure **(12)** shows whether the toilets have a water connection:

- **Yes: 54.8%** of the toilets have a water connection.
- **No: 45.2%** of the toilets do not have a water connection.



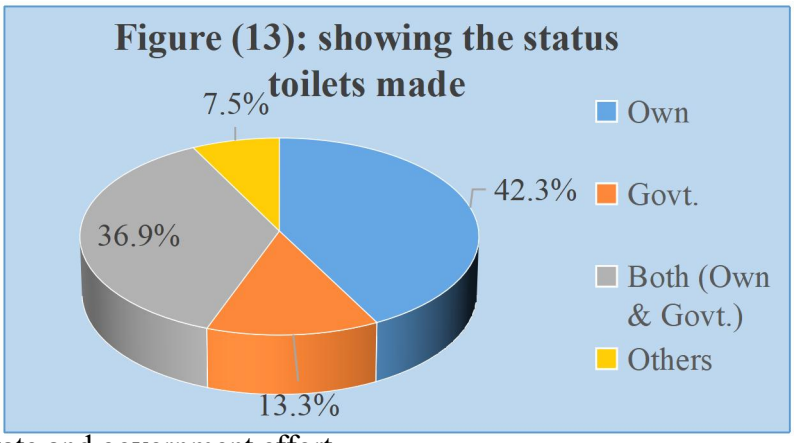
This suggests that while a majority of households have a toilet, nearly half of those toilets lack a direct water connection, which is crucial for proper hygiene and sanitation.

Standard of Toilets: The majority of toilets are of a permanent or semi-permanent nature (**96.8%** combined), which is a positive sign for sanitation infrastructure.

Functionality: Despite the high number of "Pakka" and "Semi-Pakka" toilets, a significant portion (**45.2%**) lack a direct water connection. This could imply that many of these toilets are not fully functional or require manual water fetching for flushing and cleaning.

The study population has made progress in constructing durable toilets, the lack of a direct water connection in a substantial number of these facilities remains a major concern for public health and hygiene.

Based on the provided figure **(13),** the status of toilets constructed among the study population is as follows:



- **Own:** The largest portion, **42.3%**, of toilets are privately owned.
- **Both (Own & Govt.):** A significant number of toilets, **36.9%**, were made with a combination of private and government effort.
- **Govt.:** A smaller portion, **13.3%**, were built solely by the government.
- **Others:** The smallest segment, **7.5%**, falls into the "Others" category.

The analysis shows that while a large portion of the toilets are either privately owned or a combination of both private and government initiatives, there is a clear reliance on a combination of self-funding and government support to build toilets.

The figure **(14)** shows that an overwhelming **97.0%** of the study population has access to an electric connection, while only **3.0%** does not. This indicates a high rate of electrification within the studied area.

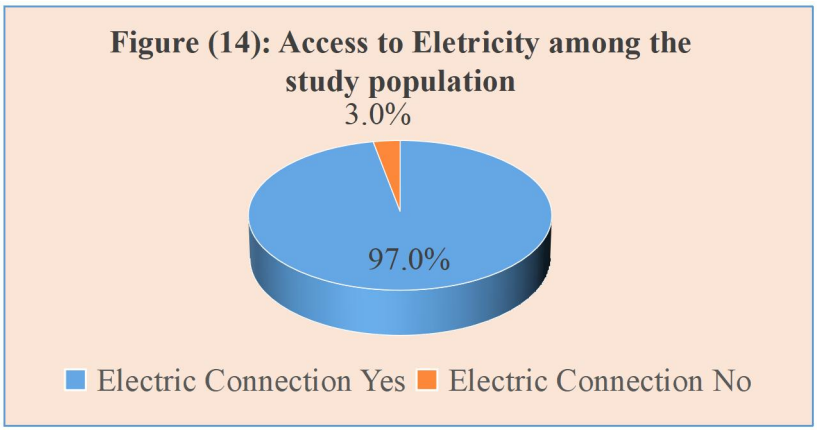
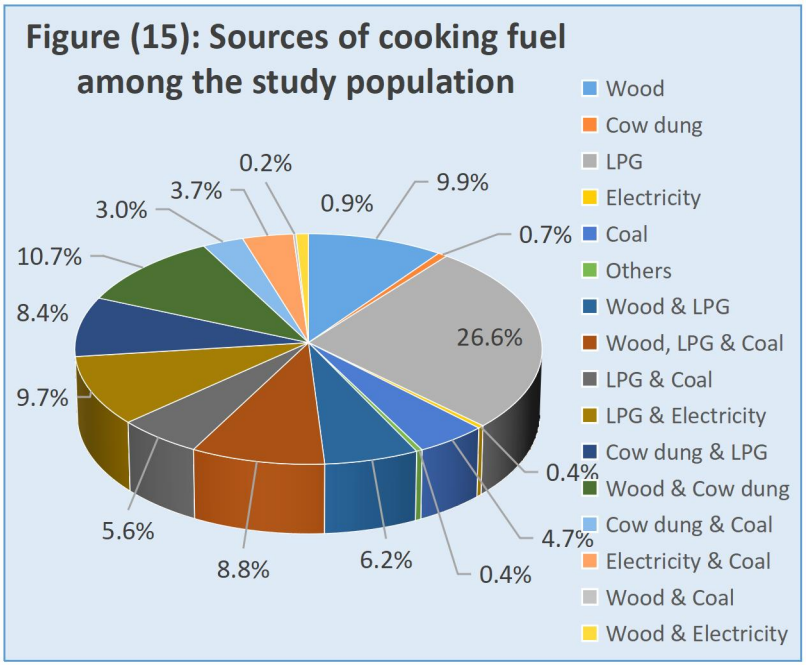


Figure **(15),** present the sources of cooking fuel for the study population are highly diverse. The largest single category is a combination of **LPG & Coal**, which accounts for **26.6%** of the total.

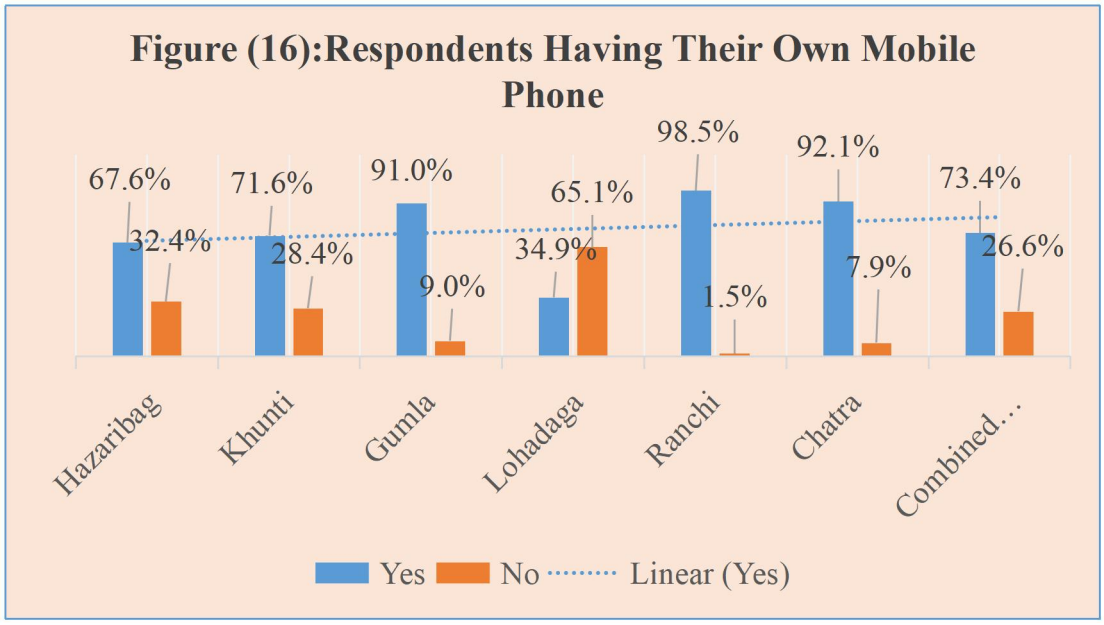


Notable fuel sources:

- **LPG: 9.9%**
- **Wood: 9.7%**
- **Wood & Cow dung: 8.4%**
- **Wood, LPG & Coal: 8.8%**
- **LPG & Electricity: 5.6%**
- **Cow dung & Coal: 4.7%**

The remaining categories are used by a smaller percentage of the population, each accounting for less than 5%.

The analysis suggests a transition in the cooking fuel habits of the population, with a significant reliance on **LPG**, often in combination with traditional fuels like **wood** and **coal**. This indicates that while modern and cleaner fuels are being adopted, older methods are still widely used, either as a primary source or as a backup. The high percentage of mixed-fuel usage (e.g., LPG & Coal) suggests a strategy to manage costs or ensure a consistent fuel supply.



Based on the bar graph **(16),** mobile phone ownership among the study population, both overall and by district.
Overall Mobile Phone Ownership, the "Combined District" column shows the overall trend:

- 73.4% of the respondents have their own mobile phone.
- 26.6% of the respondents do not have their own mobile phone.

This indicates that a large majority of the study population has personal mobile phone access, but a notable portion still lacks it.

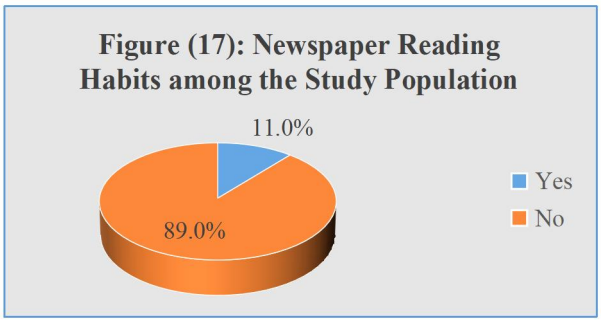
District-wise Mobile Phone Ownership:

- **Ranchi:** This district has the highest mobile phone ownership, with **98.5%** of respondents having their own mobile phone.
- **Chatra:** Ownership is also very high in this district, at **92.1%**.
- **Gumla:** This district has a high ownership rate of **91.0%**.
- **Khunti:** Ownership is lower than the previous districts, but still a clear majority at **71.6%**.
- **Hazaribag:** This district has a similar ownership rate to Khunti, with **67.6%** of respondents owning a mobile phone.
- **Lohardaga:** This district stands out as having the lowest mobile phone ownership rate, with only **65.1%** of respondents having a phone, and the highest percentage of those who do not (**34.9%**).

The blue dotted line represents a linear trend, which shows a general upward trend in mobile phone ownership across the districts, although there are significant variations. The data suggests that mobile phone ownership is widespread but not universal, with some districts having much higher rates of access than others.

Figure **(17)** showing Newspaper Reading Habits among the Study Population," the following information is presented:The majority of the study population **does not** read newspapers, accounting for **89.0%** of the respondents.

A small minority of the population **does** read newspapers, making up only **11.0%** of the respondents.

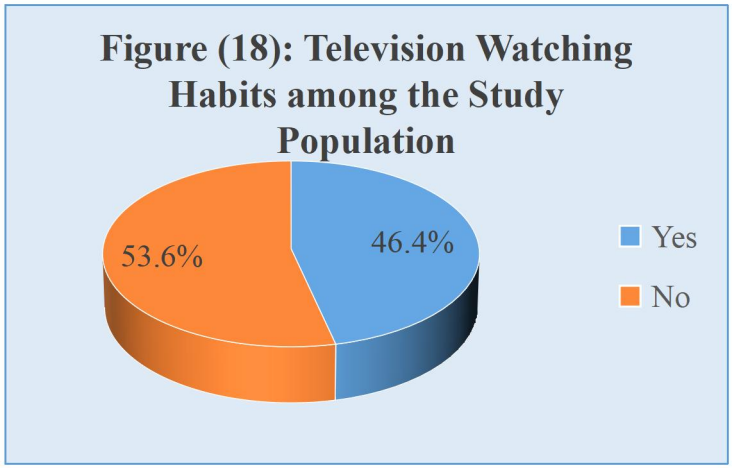


The figure clearly indicates that newspaper reading is not a common habit among the population surveyed.

Figure **(18),** the television watching habits among the study population are as follows:

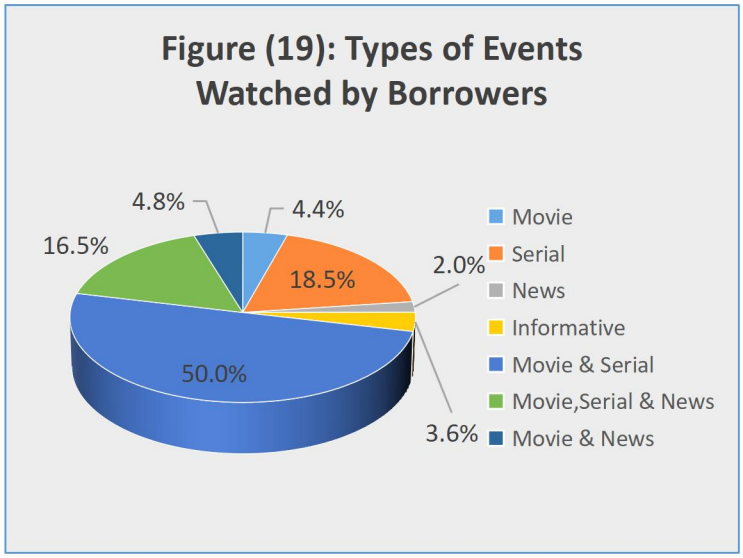
The majority of the study population, **53.6%**, **does not** watch television.

A significant portion, **46.4%**, **does** watch television.



The data indicates that while a considerable number of people in the study population watch television, a slightly larger portion does not, suggesting that television is not a universally adopted form of media or entertainment in this group.

Based on the pie chat Figure **(19):** Types of Events Watched by Borrowers," the following information is presented regarding what the population watches on television:



Movie & Serial: This combination is the most popular, watched by **50.0%** of the borrowers.

Serial: Watching only serials is the second most common habit, at **18.5%**.

Movie, Serial & News: This combination is watched by **16.5%**.

Movie: Watching only movies accounts for **4.4%**.
Movie & News: This combination is watched by **4.8%**.

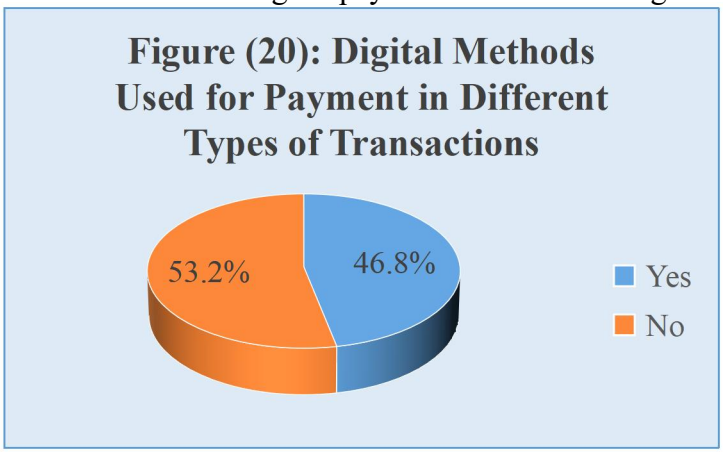
Informative: This category, which includes informative programs, is watched by **3.6%**.

News: Watching only news programs is the smallest category, at **2.0%**.

The analysis shows that entertainment content, particularly a combination of **movies and serials**, is the most preferred type of event watched by the borrowers. The high percentage of combinations suggests that people do not typically stick to a single type of content but rather watch a mix of entertainment and news.

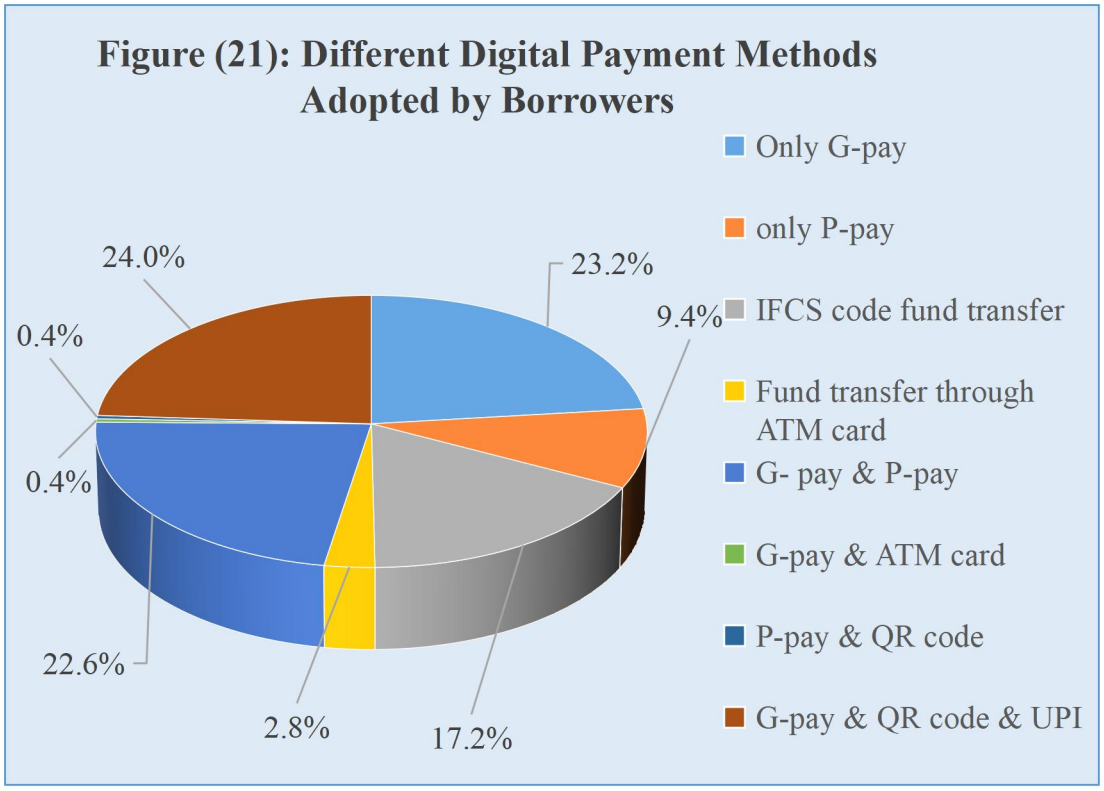
The pie chart **(Figure-20)** illustrates the use of digital payment methods among the study population.

- **No:** The majority of the study population, **53.2%**, does **not** use digital methods for payments.
- **Yes:** A significant portion, **46.8%**, **does** use digital payment methods.



This data reveals that the use of digital payment methods is not yet widespread within this population. A slight majority still relies on traditional, non-digital methods for transactions. However, the fact that nearly half of the population has adopted digital payments suggests a notable shift toward a more modern economy. The findings indicate a potential for further growth and adoption of digital financial services, but also highlight the need for continued efforts to promote digital literacy and inclusion.

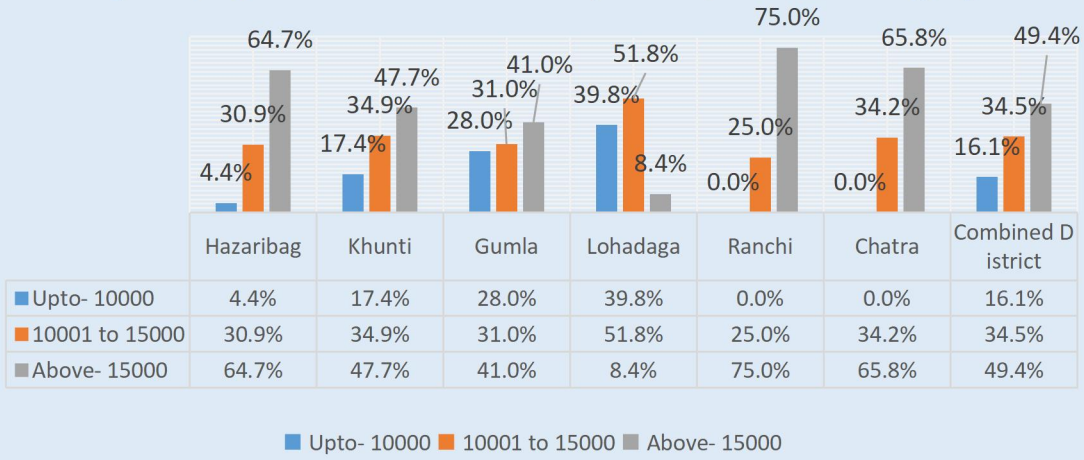
This pie chart **(Figure-21)** details the specific digital payment methods used. The



most common method is a combination of G-pay & QR code & UPI, used by 24.0% of borrowers. This is closely followed by Only G-pay, at 23.2%, and a combination of G-pay & P-pay, at 22.6%. Other methods like IFCS code fund transfer (17.2%) and Fund transfer through ATM card (9.4%) are also used. This indicates a high adoption of a variety of digital payment systems, with a strong preference for UPI-based apps like G-pay and P-pay.

The figure **(22)** displays the distribution of monthly family income across different

Figure (22): District Wise Monthly Family Income category



	Hazaribag	Khunti	Gumla	Lohadaga	Ranchi	Chatra	Combined District
Upto- 10000	4.4%	17.4%	28.0%	39.8%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%
10001 to 15000	30.9%	34.9%	31.0%	51.8%	25.0%	34.2%	34.5%
Above- 15000	64.7%	47.7%	41.0%	8.4%	75.0%	65.8%	49.4%

districts: Hazaribag, Khunti, Gumla, Lohadaga, Ranchi, and Chatra. A combined average for all districts is also included. The income is categorized into three groups:

- Upto-10000 (blue bars)
- 10001 to 15000 (orange bars)
- Above-15000 (grey bars)

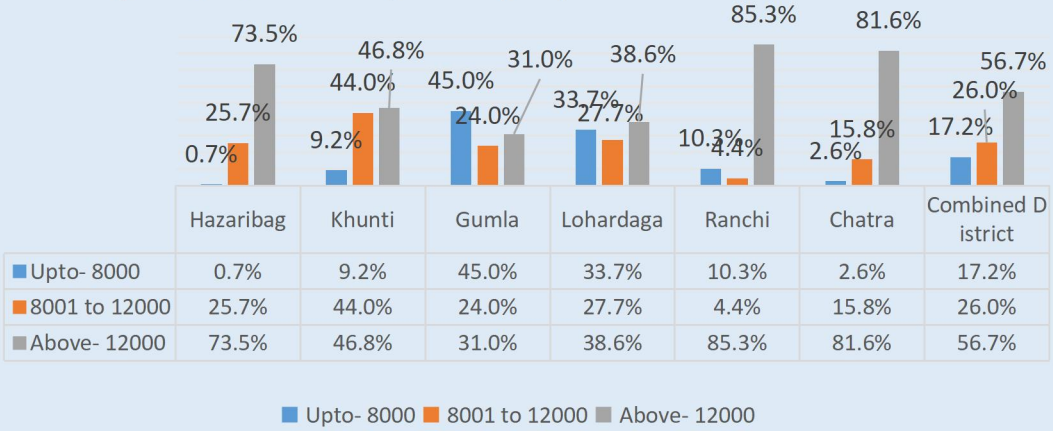
District wise;

- Hazaribag: This district has the highest percentage of families in the Above-15000 income category at 64.7%. The Upto-10000 category is the lowest at only 4.4%.
- Khunti: Income is more evenly distributed here, with the Above-15000 category at 47.7% and the 10001 to 15000 category at 34.9%.
- Gumla: This district has the largest proportion of families in the Upto-10000 category at 28.0%. The Above-15000 category is at 41.0%.
- Lohadaga: This district has the largest percentage of families in the 10001 to 15000 income group, at 51.8%. The Above-15000 category is very small, at just 8.4%.
- Ranchi: Ranchi shows a very high concentration of high-income families, with 75.0% in the Above-15000 category. No families are in the Upto-10000 category.
- Chatra: Similar to Ranchi, Chatra has no families in the Upto-10000 category and a high percentage (65.8%) in the Above-15000 category.

The overall data for the Combined District shows a general trend where the Above-15000 income category is the largest, representing 49.4% of families. The 10001 to 15000 category follows at 34.5%, and the Upto-10000 category is the smallest at 16.1%. This indicates that, on average, a significant portion of the population in these districts falls into the higher income bracket.

The figure **(23)** illustrates the distribution of monthly family expenditure for several

Figure (23): Monthly Family Expenditure accross district



	Hazaribag	Khunti	Gumla	Lohardaga	Ranchi	Chatra	Combined District
Upto- 8000	0.7%	9.2%	45.0%	33.7%	10.3%	2.6%	17.2%
8001 to 12000	25.7%	44.0%	24.0%	27.7%	4.4%	15.8%	26.0%
Above- 12000	73.5%	46.8%	31.0%	38.6%	85.3%	81.6%	56.7%

districts: Hazaribag, Khunti, Gumla, Lohadaga, Ranchi, and Chatra. A combined average for all districts is also provided. The expenditure is categorized into three groups:

- Upto-8000 (blue bars)
- 8001 to 12000 (orange bars)
- Above-12000 (grey bars)

District-Specific;

- Ranchi: This district shows the highest percentage of families in the Above-12000 expenditure category, with a dominant 85.3%. Conversely, it has the lowest percentages in the lower expenditure categories.
- Chatra: Similar to Ranchi, Chatra has a very high percentage of families in the Above-12000 expenditure category at 81.6%.
- Hazaribag: A large majority of families (73.5%) fall into the Above-12000 expenditure bracket.
- Gumla: This district has the highest proportion of families in the Upto-8000 expenditure category at 45.0%. It also has the lowest percentage of families in the Above-12000 category at 31.0%.
- Lohadaga: Expenditure is more evenly spread, with a significant portion of families in the Upto-8000 (33.7%) and Above-12000 (38.6%) categories.
- Khunti: The expenditure is also relatively distributed here, with the 8001 to 12000 category having a notable percentage at 44.0%.

The overall data for the Combined District indicates that the majority of families have high monthly expenditures. The Above-12000 category accounts for 56.7% of families, while the 8001 to 12000 and Upto-8000 categories make up 26.0% and 17.2%, respectively. This suggests that, on average, a significant portion of the population across these districts has a high spending capacity.

Table (6): District wise average Loan size of the studied population.

District	Present Loan Amount (Rs)			
	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Hazaribag	51959.55	25080.31	9000	150000
Khunti	67599.26	32041.1	3000	160000
Gumla	68860	38152.54	10000	200000
Lohardaga	62408.43	28932	5000	200000
Ranchi	89926.47	40477.49	15000	200000
Chatra	55389.47	22443.74	28000	150000
Overall	64973.07	33795.6	3000	200000

The table **(6)** presents a comprehensive overview of loan sizes across six districts: Hazaribag, Khunti, Gumla, Lohardaga, Ranchi, and Chatra. The data is broken down by the mean, standard deviation (SD), minimum, and maximum loan amounts.

Average Loan Size (Mean);

- Highest Average Loan: Ranchi has the highest average loan size at ₹89,926.47, which is significantly higher than any other district.
- Lowest Average Loan: Hazaribag has the lowest average loan size at ₹51,959.55.
- Overall Average: The overall average loan size for all studied districts is ₹64,973.07. Ranchi and Khunti have mean loan sizes above this average, while the others fall below it.

In summary, Ranchi not only has the highest average loan size but also shows the most significant variation in loan amounts. In contrast, districts like Hazaribag and Chatra have lower average loan sizes, with Chatra also exhibiting the least variability, suggesting a more consistent loan amount distribution.

Table (7): District-wise monthly Average Loan Repayment Amount of the Study Population

District	Monthly Present Loan Repayment Amount (Rs)			
	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Hazaribag	2783.69	1723.41	850	12100
Khunti	3943.19	2086.00	660	13400
Gumla	3424.57	3738.68	1000	20000
Lohardaga	38..020	2079.84	1000	10000
Ranchi	5330.26	1803.45	2000	10000
Chatra	2669.34	1061.01	1250	6000
Overall	3619.74	2252.72	660	20000

The table **(7)** provides a summary of the monthly loan repayment amounts for several districts. The data includes the mean, standard deviation (SD), minimum, and maximum values.

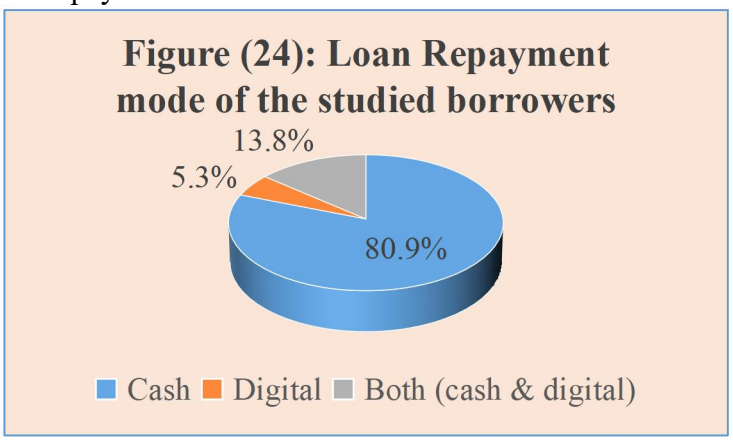
Average Repayment Amount (Mean);

- Ranchi has the highest average monthly repayment amount at ₹5,330.26.
- Chatra has the lowest average monthly repayment amount at ₹2,669.34.
- The overall average repayment amount across all districts is ₹3,619.74.
- The largest individual monthly repayment amount of ₹20,000 is found in Gumla.
- The smallest individual monthly repayment amount of ₹660 is found in Khunti.

In summary, Ranchi has the highest average loan repayment, while Chatra has the lowest. Gumla exhibits the widest range and variability in its repayment amounts, whereas Chatra shows the most consistent repayment values.

The pie chart Figure **(24)**: Loan Repayment mode of the studied borrowers.

It describes how borrowers in the study repay their loans, categorized into three distinct modes:



- **Cash**: This is the most dominant mode of repayment, accounting for **80.9%** of the borrowers.
- **Both (cash & digital)**: This combined repayment method is used by **13.8%** of the borrowers.
- **Digital**: This is the least common mode, used by only **5.3%** of the borrowers.

In summary, the chart clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of borrowers in the study prefer or rely on cash for loan repayment, while digital methods, whether used exclusively or in combination with cash, are far less common.

Figure **(25)**: Status of Loan Repayment among Group Participants This pie chart displays the success rate of loan repayment among group participants. An overwhelming majority of group participants, 92.30%, have a positive participation for loan repayment (Yes). A very small minority, just 7.70%, has a negative loan repayment status (No). The

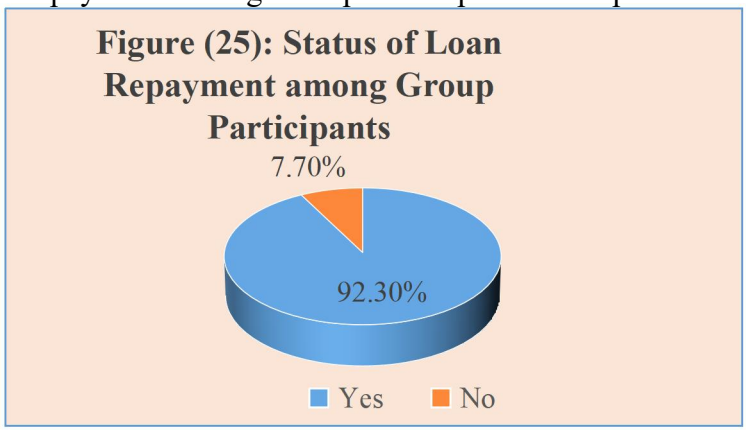
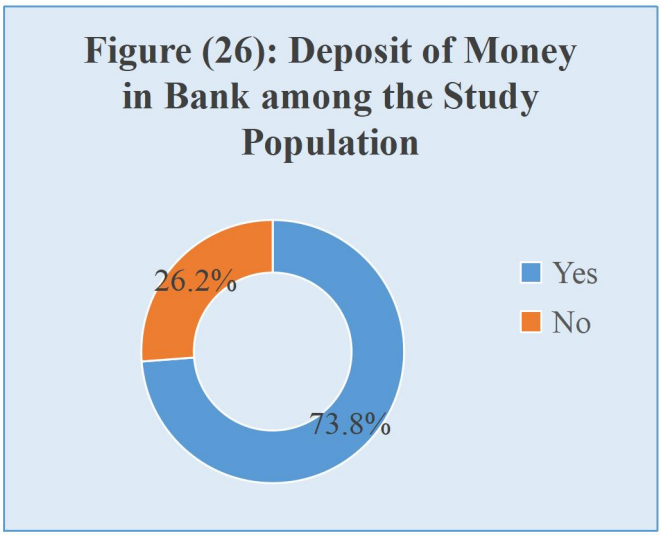


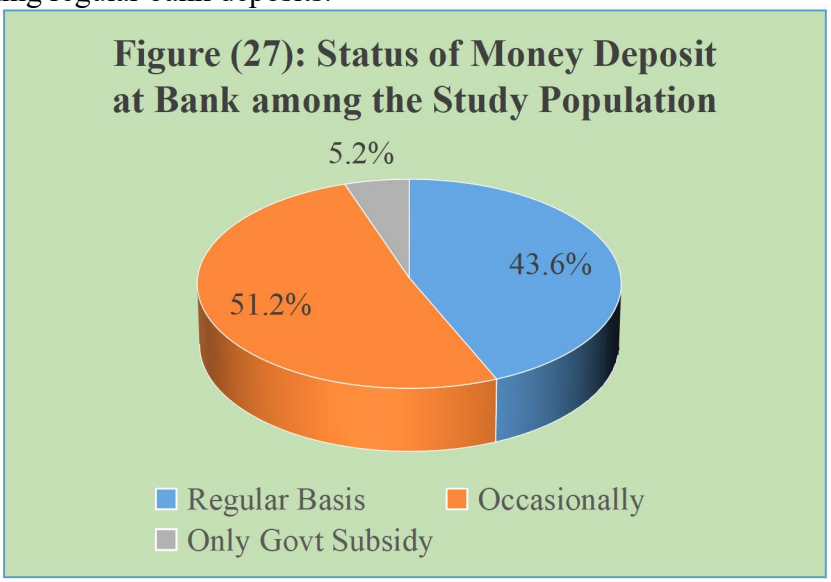
chart highlights a very high rate of successful loan repayment within the group, suggesting that the group lending model is highly effective.

Figure (26): Deposit of Money in Bank Among the Study Population;



This is a donut chart that shows the percentage of the studied population that deposits money in a bank. The chart has two categories: "Yes" and "No." The larger segment, representing 73.8%, indicates that the majority of the population does deposit money in a bank. The smaller segment, at 26.2%, represents the population that does not. This suggests a relatively high level of bank account usage and financial inclusion among the surveyed group.

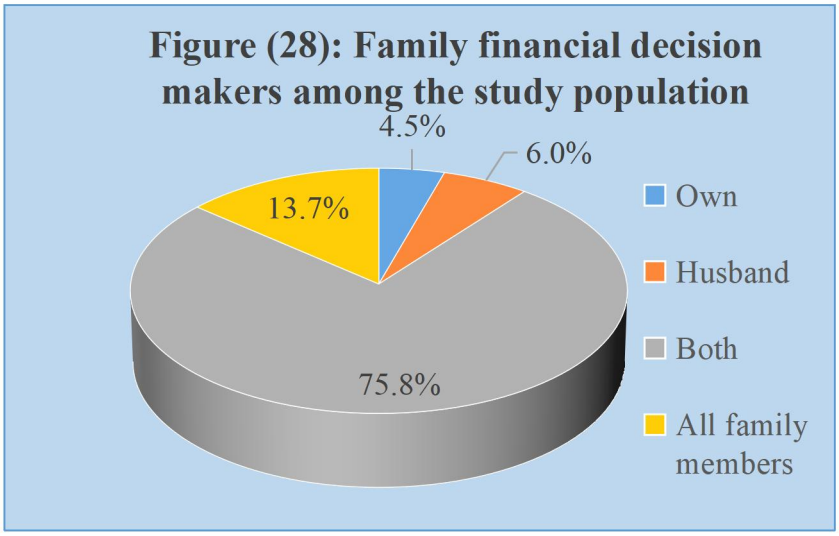
The Figure **(27):** shows that a little over half of the people in the study population don't have a habit of making regular bank deposits.



Occasional Depositors: The largest group, 51.2% of the study population deposits money "Occasionally." This indicates that a majority of the people don't consistently use their bank for frequent savings or transactions. **Regular Depositors:** A significant portion, 43.6%, deposits money on a "Regular Basis." This group represents nearly half of the population and suggests a steady engagement with the banking system for a large number of people.

Government Subsidy Only: The smallest group, making up 5.2%, uses their bank account "Only for Govt Subsidy." This suggests that their primary or only interaction with the bank is for receiving government benefits. This group likely represents those who are financially vulnerable and have limited personal funds to deposit.

Figure **(28):** Family financial decision makers among the study population, reveals the distribution of financial decision-making authority within the families surveyed.



Joint Decision-Making: The overwhelming majority of the study population, at 75.8%, reports that financial decisions are made by "Both" spouses (husband and wife). This indicates a strong prevalence of joint financial management and shared responsibility.

Individual Decision-Making: A small minority of households have financial decisions made by a single person.

Own: Only 4.5% of the individuals in the study make financial decisions on their own. This group might consist of single individuals or those where one person is solely responsible for finances.

Husband": An equally small percentage, 6.0%, reported that the "Husband" is the sole financial decision-maker.

Group Decision-Making: A notable portion, 13.7%, indicates that financial decisions are made by "All family members." This suggests a more collective, inclusive approach to managing finances, involving more than just the primary couple.

In summary, the data clearly shows that joint financial decision-making is the dominant model among the study population, with nearly three-quarters of households sharing this responsibility. Unilateral decision-making by either a husband or an individual is much less common. The involvement of all family members in financial matters is also more prevalent than single-person control.

Major Findings from the study:

1. **Demographics and Socio-economic Profile**:

- The study population is primarily comprised of young and middle-aged adults between 18 and 40 years old, with the largest group being 31-40 years old (44.8%).
- They are overwhelmingly married women (97.2%), who are seen as the central figures in household economic activities.
- More than half of the population (53.4%) is Below Poverty Line (BPL).
- The majority belong to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes (SC), making up 68% of the total population.
- Educational attainment is generally low, with most having reached only the upper primary or middle school level.

2. **Financial Behavior and Infrastructure**:

- A high percentage of the population deposits money in a bank (73.8%), but most do so only occasionally (51.2%), not on a regular basis.
- Financial decisions are predominantly made jointly by both spouses (75.8%), highlighting a shared responsibility model.
- The loan repayment rate is very high at 92.3%.Cash is the primary method for loan repayment (80.9%), with digital methods being used by a small minority.

3. **Household and Lifestyle Characteristics**:

- A significant majority of households (87.8%) have a family size of up to six members.
- Most homes have two living rooms (68.4%).
- Access to electricity is nearly universal (97%).
- Toilet access is high (80.3%). However, almost half of these toilets lack a direct water connection, which affects hygiene.
- Mobile phone ownership is widespread (73.4%).
- Newspaper reading is not common (89% do not read them), while television watching is split, with a slight majority not watching it (53.6%).

Conclusion and Suggestion: The study demonstrates that microfinance programs are successfully reaching their intended beneficiaries: economically disadvantaged, young, and middle-aged married women. The high loan repayment success rate and the prevalence of joint financial decision-making are strong indicators of the effectiveness of the microfinance model and the positive social dynamics at play.

However, several areas can be improved to foster greater economic empowerment and social development:

1. Strengthen Financial Literacy and Inclusion:

Goal: Shift from occasional deposits to regular savings.

Suggestion: Microfinance institutions should actively promote financial literacy workshops to educate borrowers on the importance of regular savings and investment. These programs could link consistent savings with future loan eligibility or lower interest rates.

Goal: Increase the adoption of digital payments.

Suggestion: Given the high mobile phone ownership, training and incentives should be provided to encourage the use of digital payment methods for transactions and loan repayments. This would reduce the reliance on cash and enhance security and transparency.

2. **Improve Sanitation and Hygiene**:

Goal: Ensure fully functional sanitation facilities.

Suggestion: While toilet construction is high, the lack of water connections is a major issue. Development programs should prioritize not just the building of toilets, but also the establishment of **reliable water supply systems** to ensure these facilities are usable and hygienic. Partnerships between government agencies and microfinance institutions could provide loans specifically for water connections.

3. **Tailor Information and Communication Strategies**:

Goal: Effectively disseminate information on health, finance, and government schemes.

Suggestion: Given that newspaper reading is rare and television watching is common but not universal, information campaigns should utilize the most popular media forms. Since movies and serials are the most watched content, information could be integrated into these shows or promoted through short, engaging video content distributed via mobile phones and community-based screenings.

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